SOCIAL INTERACTION IN ONLINE LEARNING: AN URGENCY

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A. Introduction

Since the Covid-19 outbreak hit Indonesia in early March 2020, the government has adopted a new educational strategy, namely distance learning, also known as online learning. Teachers have to move from teaching in face-to-face instruction to online learning.

Although online learning is thought to be a feasible alternative, it has prompted debate. Because of the diversity of teachers' technological literacy skills, this learning model also requires more preparation. Not all areas are reached by internet connection, and students' various financial and economic situations are also a challenge in online learning. As a consequence of these causes, the disparity in students' learning achievement emerges.

Learning achievement are generally measured from three domains: cognitive (knowledge), psychomotor (skills), and affective (attitudes). The cognitive domain involves thinking skills, such as describing an idea or solving a problem. The psychomotor domain refers to the learning of physical skills such as movement, coordination, and the use of the motor-skills areas. The affective domain includes the ability to deal with things emotionally, such as beliefs, attitudes, emotions, and values. O'neill and Murphy (2010) stated that a teacher's assessment of students should include all these three domains.

The affective domain, however, is the most difficult to attain in online learning, based on the author's experience. As Popham (1999) points out, if the affective domain is not reached its full potential, the success of learning is indirectly affected. In line with Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia's hypothesis (1964), the affective domain has a significant influence on cognitive domain development.

One of the reasons for achieving an affective domain that does not hit its optimum level is the lack of interaction during online learning. The interaction between students and a teacher is still present during online learning, but they are limited to materials and assignment distribution. The limited opportunity for thinking and reasoning and the little discussion session are all influenced by limited interaction. This limited interaction has an indirect effect on student engagement, which impacts their motivation to learn. According to Egbert and Shahrokni (2019), student engagement can be defined as the absorption capacity of materials provided in a learning environment and enthusiasm to participate in other activities.

Interaction also plays a significant role in developing students' social-emotional competence. According to McDonald et al. (2018), as students participate in learning, they directly interact with the teacher and his peers, which indirectly stimulates social and emotional growth. Concerning social-emotional development, Santrock (2014) explains that social development includes how students learn to interact with others around them. Emotional development involves understanding, experiencing, expressing, and controlling students' feelings and emotions. Providing opportunities for students to practice these skills is vital as they develop and grow. Since social interaction is critical in the learning process, a strategy for bridging social interaction in online learning is needed.

B. Discussion

1. The Concept of Interaction in Online Learning

The Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (KBBI) describes interaction as reciprocal action, relationship, or influence. Interaction is a mutual activity between learners and a teacher or peers in the context of learning. The interaction may be created online, without having to a face-to-face meeting. As Gillin and Gillin (1948) stated, a prerequisite for interaction is social contact and communication. Social contact is not limited to face-to-face interactions but can include correspondence, chat, and other communication forms. And communication can be done in person or through certain platforms or social media. In online learning, social contact and communication are essential for interaction. A teacher may measure a learner's comprehension of the materials that have been delivered and their attitude (interest, motivation to learn, etc.) by social contact and communication.

Social contact and communication in online learning can be conducted in two ways, synchronous and asynchronous (Romiszowski and Mason, 1996). In synchronous mode, a teacher and students communicate simultaneously, even though they are in different places. While asynchronous mode offers the flexibility of time, learning does not have to be done simultaneously. Both synchronous and asynchronous modes have advantages and disadvantages. Synchronous mode helps speed up face-to-face interactions and eliminates discomfort, but messages are not conveyed well if the internet network is unstable. While the asynchronous mode lets students take the time they need at their convenience, the interactions are not fast enough.

Both students and the teacher have to wait for hours or even days to get the response of messages and feedback.

2. Types of Interaction in Online Learning

There are three fundamental interactions in online learning (Moore, 1989), (1) learner-content interaction (interaction between students and teaching materials), (2) learner-teacher interaction (interaction between students and a teacher), and (3) learner-learner interaction (interaction between students). Interaction with teaching materials helps students obtain information; interaction between students and teachers allows dialogue to acquire motivation and feedback; interactions among students facilitate a forum for sharing ideas/opinions and information about the content learned.

In line with those three types of interactions, Bates (1986) proposes two kinds of interactions that can be occurred in online learning. They are (1) isolated activity (individual interaction) which is an interaction between students and teaching materials, and (2) social activity (social interaction), which includes the interaction between two or more people. Complementing Moore and Bates' concept of interaction, Hillman et al. (1994) added the interaction between students and technology as a fourth interaction. This interaction plays a role in ensuring students' learning ease. The interaction of all learning elements (students, teachers, teaching materials, and technology) plays a vital role in ensuring students' academic achievement.

3. The Relation of Interaction and Learning Experience

Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (1999) demonstrate that students' learning achievement can be reached if a teacher pays attention to the required elements for a successful learning experience, as follows.
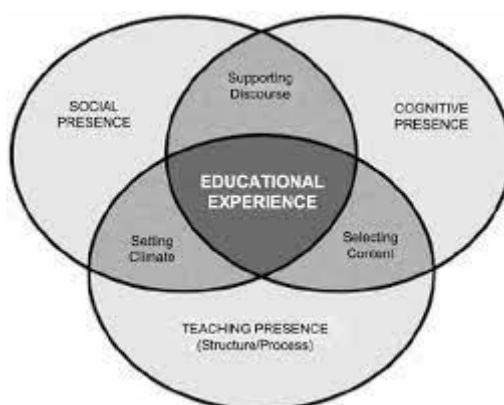

Figure 1. Elements of a learning experience

Cognitive presence is defined as exploration, construction, and confirmation of understanding, which involves thinking critically and creatively, listening to, and expressing ideas. By having this cognitive presence, students can share information, apply new ideas, and connect ideas created by continuous communication. From the standpoint of cognitive presence, a teacher should develop instructional resources to foster students' interest and curiosity to explore their understanding. Cognitive presence cannot stand alone. The achievement of learning objectives can be optimized through discussion, collaboration, and reflection that depend on teaching presence and social presence.

Teaching presence includes an instructional role (systematically learning designs) in the learning environment. In teaching presence, there is an interaction between a teacher and students. Teaching presence is significant in achieving learning success. This aspect of teaching presence emphasizes that a teacher must be able to convey learning goals, materials, and instructions during learning activities. It will make it easier for students to participate in learning activities to confirm and develop their understanding of the concepts discussed during learning activities.

Social presence fosters peer relationships. Social presence is significant to build a convenient learning environment. It will provide a comfortable feeling when interacting and participating in discussions with other students and the teacher. In other words, this aspect of social presence affects students' involvement and encourages collaboration between students.

If they support each other, these three elements can help achieve the success of the learning experience. The interaction of students with teaching materials will create cognitive experiences (cognitive presence), interactions between students and the teacher will produce learning experiences that are systematically designed (teaching presence), and interactions

between students will create social experiences (social presence). Thus, a teacher must prepare various forms of activities that can increase motivation, interest, student interaction, collaboration in an online class, not only interaction with teaching materials, but also interaction with a teacher and peers.

4. **Interaction Strategies in Online Learning**

From the discussion, it can be inferred that students can learn better when they are actively involved through the interaction process, rather than just listening to lectures from a teacher through video or even just reading the materials provided. Several strategies that a teacher can use to build interactions in online learning are:

a. Strengthen the interaction between students and the teacher

When a teacher and students are separated by distance, creating interactions to strengthen the two's relationship becomes an important thing. For example, while waiting for class to start, both the teacher and students can use the platform's chat feature to ask about the students' life and feelings. This chat feature can also be used to ask questions or provide comments during the class. Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, Edmodo, or school E-learning already provides this chat feature.

Another application that can be used to strengthen the interaction between students and a teacher is WhatsApp. WhatsApp has become a popular choice for online learning among teachers and parents of students due to its ease of use and low cost. Voice notes and stickers can be used to strengthen the interaction between the teacher and students. Through voice notes, messages can be conveyed more clearly than through writing. By using stickers, the learning atmosphere will be more fun. Various stickers on WhatsApp are also able to make conversations more interactive and exciting during the class.

Then, when students are taking online classes in synchronous mode, it is necessary to remind students to always turn on their videos. To ensure students' presence, a teacher can also more easily know the students' interest in learning. Thus, the teacher can immediately find out the need for interaction during online learning.

b. Planning interactive quizzes that can be answered in real-time

Not only to make assessments quickly and easily, but interactive quizzes can also be used to increase fun atmosphere and enthusiasm for learning. Interactive quizzes can also be a means to collect students' opinions and measure their understanding of the material and measure their involvement and participation in real-time. This direct response allows the teacher to interact and align the material to suit students' level of understanding during learning. Students can also immediately see other students' responses to become excited to be involved in the learning, even though they are online.

An application that can be used to create this interactive quiz is Kahoot. Kahoot is a real-time game-based learning platform that can be accessed via a browser or the Kahoot application. Because it is presented in the form of a game, the use of Kahoot can increase interest in learning. Kahoot is freely available and easy to use for the teacher. A teacher can create quizzes and surveys that can be used to measure learners' understanding, for formative assessments, or just for icebreakers. Quizzes in Kahoot can be played individually or in groups. Similar applications that have similar functions and features are Quizizz and Socrative.

Students can also be encouraged to interact using interactive quizzes in an opinion poll system by using the Mentimeter. Mentimeter is an easy-to-use online application. Through this application, a teacher can collect opinions from students, which can be used as an issue for discussion sessions and feedback from students to improve the quality of learning. By using this application, a teacher can also ensure that students follow and participate in online learning. Responses from students will be obtained and can be delivered to students in a short time.

c. Creating interaction among students

One way to create interaction among students is through group work. Students can be divided into several small groups that allow them to work together to solve problems given by the teacher. One of them is by using GoogleDocs. GoogleDocs is a feature from Google that will enable students to collaborate. By using GoogleDocs, students can write and edit together. The teacher can also check whether students are involved in the discussion or not. Another application that can be used for collaboration is Padlet.

Building interaction among students can also be done through discussion forums using mind mapping method. This mind mapping method helps visualize concepts that can help students understand and enable interaction among students in communicating their ideas. An application that can be used is MindMeister. Through MindMeister, students can capture, develop, and share ideas visually. MindMeister also enables collaboration among

students. Similar applications that can be used for mind mapping are Coggle, Ayoa, XMind, and Simple Mind.

C. Conclusion

The development of online learning models still supports quality education, despite challenges and obstacles. Building interactions between students and a teacher or peers cannot be ignored in online learning. The learning process is still carried out humanely and provides students' best possible outcomes. Students still need discussion, reflection, guidance, and feedback to indirectly strengthen their motivation and interest in online learning. Also, interaction will improve the social-emotional development of students.

Therefore, a teacher needs to prepare materials and assignments and prepare learning activities to create interactions between students and a teacher or peers. Some of the strategies that a teacher can take in building interactions in online learning are: (1) strengthening the interaction of a teacher and students, (2) creating interactive quizzes that can be answered in real-time, and (3) creating interactions among students through features of an online learning platform used.

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Rahmi Munfangati was born in Gunungkidul on February 11, 1985. The author is a lecturer in the English Education Study Program at Ahmad Dahlan University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The author completed her undergraduate degree in the Department of English Literature, Gadjah Mada University, and her master's degree in the Applied Linguistics Study Program, Yogyakarta State University. The author's research interests are ICT in ELT, Media Development, and Teaching Literature.